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Political prisoners' release proposed ahead of dialogue

• Self-styled 'National Dialogue Committee' says they will field names for negotiators in consultation with jailed opposition leaders • Wants Zardari, Shehbaz and Nawaz to represent govt side • Seeks freedom for political activities; urges appointment of Senate, NA opposition leaders • Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan stays away from dialogue; leadership to visit Lahore for 'mobilisation'

By Ikram Junaidi

ISLAMABAD: As proposals for talks between the government and the opposition remain in limbo, a clique of politicians — under the banner of the 'National Dialogue Committee' (NDC) — on Tuesday called for the release of all political prisoners to reduce acrimony and pave the way for reconciliation.

The proposal came at a conference, organised by the newly formed NDC , led by former PTI leaders Fawad Chaudhry, Imran Ismail, and Dr Shahzad Waseem, in the federal capital.

Some of the political notables present at the event included former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, former Karachi mayor Waseem Akhtar, ex-PTI leader Sher Afzal Marwat, and Jamaat-i-Islami's Liaquat Baloch, among others.

The moot in the federal capital was the continuation of similar overtures, including a recent letter written to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif by former PTI leaders, asking him to engage the opposition.

These attempts, however, have not been successful, as the proponents hold little clout in the current set-up, and have even been described by some uncharitable observers as being "political lightweights".

On Wednesday, these leaders once again pushed for reconciliation.

In a statement issued after the conference, they said the government and the opposition should form separate bodies for talks to reduce political tensions.

"The meeting agreed to the proposal to initiate a fruitful negotiation process and declared that, in this regard, the government and the opposition should form separate committees comprising their respective representatives, between which the dialogue process should be initiated," the statement read.

Keeping opposition posts vacant 'recipe for disaster', warns Raza Rabbani: Page 3

President Asif Ali Zardari, PML-N President Nawaz Sharif, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif may represent the ruling coalition in the talks, while the dialogue committee, in consultations with the PTI incarcerated leadership, will propose the names for the opposition committee following the government's announcement.

It may be noted that the PTI had distanced itself from the group led by Mr Chaudhry after he started making efforts to reconcile his former party with the government and the powers that be.

The Tehreek Tahafuz Ayeen-i-Pakistan (TTAP), a multi-party opposition alliance steered by the PTI, was also absent from the conference despite

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DAMBULLA: Pakistan captain Salman Agha runs between the wickets during the first Twenty20 international against Sri Lanka on Wednesday. Pakistan triumphed with a commanding six-wicket victory in the opening match of the three-game series, billed as a dress rehearsal for the World Cup, which Sri Lanka will co-host with India.—AFP Report on Page 18

Pak-China working group on security to meet quarterly

• Interior ministers of both countries interact in Beijing; agree to deepen counterterrorism cooperation • Mohsin Naqvi says special unit being set up in Islamabad for security of Chinese nationals

By Iftikhar A. Khan

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China on Wednesday agreed that their joint working group (JWG) on security would meet every three months to deepen counterterrorism cooperation.

The understanding was reached during a meeting between Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and his Chinese counterpart Wang Xiaohong in Beijing.

The meeting was held at the Chinese Ministry of Public Security, where it was also decided that the two interior ministers would meet once a year.

During the three-and-a-half-hour meeting, both sides discussed bilateral relations and joint counterterrorism initiatives.

In-depth discussions were held on counterterrorism cooperation, police training exchange programmes, and expanding collaboration in areas of mutual interest.

Both ministers emphasised the need for improved coordination to further enhance bilateral cooperation.

Mr Wang expressed satisfaction with the security measures taken by Pakistan for Chinese citizens and projects, and thanked Mr Naqvi and his team.

He praised Pakistan's counterterrorism and internal security efforts, saying China highly valued Islamabad's sacrifices in the fight against terrorism.

Both sides agreed to further strengthen rapid response mechanisms against terrorism and crime, and to expand the scope of police training exchange programmes.

Matters pertaining to Islamabad-Beijing sister-city cooperation were also discussed. The two ministers agreed on a joint strategy to enhance training and professional capacity within police and security institutions.

'Special protection unit'

Mr Naqvi highlighted the significance of sharing experience and information between the security institutions of both countries through training programmes.

He also briefed his counterpart on security arrangements for Chinese nationals and projects, underscoring that their protection remained a top priority for Pakistan.

"Pakistan has taken strong measures at all levels for the security of Chinese nationals and is establishing a special protection unit in Islamabad," he said.

The interior minister welcomed

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'Massive' operation in katcha area of Sindh announced

By Waseem Shamsi

SUKKUR: The Sindh government on Wednesday announced a "massive" operation against dacoits in the katcha areas of the province, vowing to eliminate them through the use of state force.

Speaking to reporters after presiding over a high-level meeting on the law and order situation in the Sukkur and Larkana ranges, Home Minister Ziaul Hassan Lanjar said it had been decided that "we are definitely heading towards a massive operation".

"We will use whatever resources we have, with specific targets, and take ruthless action against the infamous dacoits you see on social media," he said, adding that special focus would be placed on Sukkur and Larkana.

Asked when the operation against riverine dacoits would begin, the minister said: "You may consider that the operation has begun from today."

Mr Lanjar said dacoits would be given a chance to lay down their arms and

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ON OTHER PAGES

Talks to turn Saudi loan into JF-17 deal

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are in talks to convert about $2bn of Saudi loans into a JF-17 fighter jet deal, two sources told *Reuters*, deepening military ties after the two nations signed a mutual defence pact. The talks underscore how the two allies are moving to operationalise defence cooperation at a time when Pakistan is facing acute financial strain and Saudi Arabia is reshaping its security partnerships. **Page 12**

PIA lost over Rs30bn due to negligence, PAC told

• Extended aircraft grounding causes Rs21.8bn loss; Rs8.6bn hit from not selling old inventory • Procurement violations, irregular payments added to the loss • Defence ministry blames pandemic constraints, supply issues

By Jamal Shahid

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan International Airlines Corporation (PIACL) lost over Rs30 billion due to the alleged negligence of its management, resulting in the prolonged grounding of aircraft and the failure to dispose of spare parts and retired aircraft.

Officials from the Auditor General's office informed the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) that PIA aircraft took an extended time in routine maintenance ranging from 44 to 239 days. The audit officials stated that this delay resulted in substantial operational and financial losses in 2022.

While discussing audit objections of the Aviation Division and the Ministry of Defence for the fiscal year 2023-24, officials revealed that one aircraft was grounded for 652 days.

The audit department was of the view that due to the negligence of the management, extended delays occurred which resulted in unjustified losses amounting to Rs21.82bn.

Similarly, PIA picked up further losses of Rs8.6bn due to the non-disposal of spare parts and retired aircraft.

The audit observed that the management had held an inventory of spare parts for retired aircraft valued at Rs8.566 billion since 2015 to 2021, which had not been disposed of in violation of rules.

These spares included parts from 747, 707, Cessna, SA-310 and

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Policy shift a must for lasting peace in KP: CM Afridi

• Questions fresh military operation after past failures • Says such actions caused displacement, unmet compensation promises • Claims focus is not militancy, but 'rooting out PTI and its founder'

By Umer Farooq

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Sohail Afridi on Wednesday said that given the persistence of militancy despite 17 years of multiple military operations in the province, a policy shift developed through consultation with all stakeholders was essential for lasting peace.

"A policy shift, not through decisions taken behind closed doors but in consultation with the KP government, stakeholders, elders and residents, will play a vital role in achieving lasting peace," the chief minister said.

Addressing female students of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar at a convocation held at the University of Peshawar, Mr Afridi said criticism was often levelled but policies were also proposed, adding that if such policies were implemented, they would prove productive for KP

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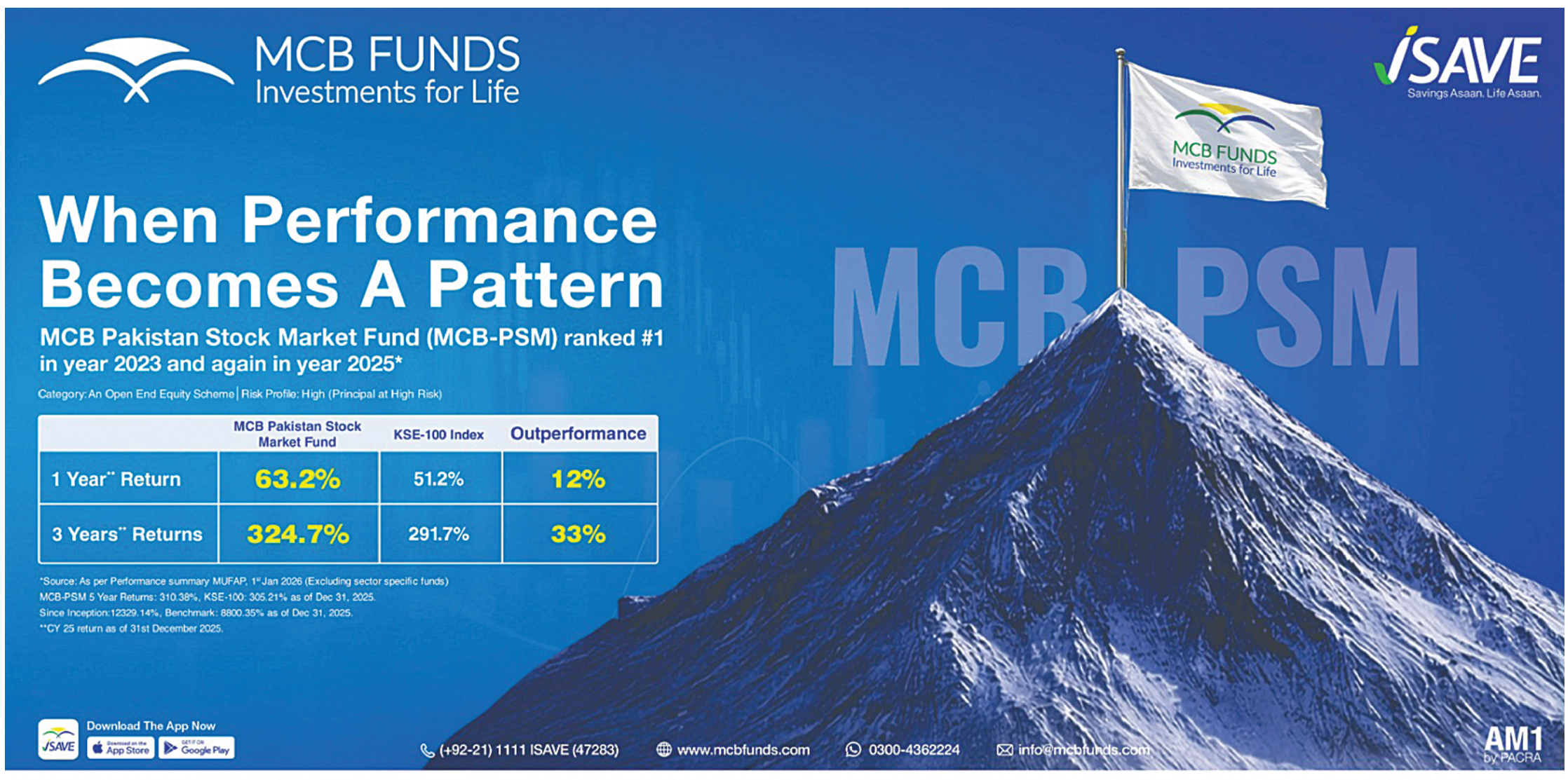
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When Performance Becomes A Pattern
MCB Pakistan Stock Market Fund (MCB-PSM) ranked #1 in year 2023 and again in year 2025*
Category: An Open End Equity Scheme | Risk Profile: High (Principal at High Risk)
MCB Pakistan Stock Market Fund
KSE-100 Index
Outperformance
1 Year** Return
63.2%
51.2%
12%
3 Years** Returns
324.7%
291.7%
33%
*Source: As per Performance summary MUFAP, 1st Jan 2026 (Excluding sector specific funds)
MCB-PSM 5 Year Returns: 310.38%, KSE-100: 305.21% as of Dec 31, 2025.
Since Inception:12329.14%, Benchmark: 8800.35% as of Dec 31, 2025.
**CY 25 return as of 31st December 2025.
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